

GOVERNOR PATRICK URGES RESIDENTS TO TAKE PRECAUTIONS DURING EXTREME COLD WEATHER

Marshalling state resources, Patrick-Murray Administration provides public safety, fuel assistance, sheltering services for individuals, communities

BOSTON – Saturday, January 22, 2011 – Following a briefing with top public safety, emergency management and housing officials today, Governor Deval Patrick urged residents across the Commonwealth to take extra precautions during the period of dangerously cold weather the National Weather Service is forecasting will begin tomorrow, and directed state agencies to coordinate with cities and towns to protect the public's safety.

“As this bitter cold approaches, I have put state agencies on high alert to respond to any public safety and public health issues that may emerge, including contacting our largest individual emergency shelters to ensure they will be open to everyone around the clock,” said Governor Patrick. “We are also reaching out to cities and towns to make sure they are prepared, and have pledged support, where needed, of state fuel assistance, transportation, emergency housing, and emergency management resources.”

Governor Patrick, in coordination with the United Way and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency, has put the Mass 2-1-1 call center on high alert, particularly for individuals seeking fuel or sheltering services. Any resident in need of assistance can call 2-1-1, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Patrick-Murray Administration recently announced that Massachusetts will receive an additional \$73 million in emergency federal fuel assistance, bringing its total allotment to \$173 million. Thanks to this infusion of funds, heating oil delivery vendors will be able to make emergency deliveries to eligible individuals and families. To find their nearest provider, residents should call 1-800-632-8175.

The Patrick-Murray Administration also recommends individuals take the following safety precautions:

Stay indoors. First and foremost, we recommend that you minimize outside activities in the next few days, particularly for elderly residents and the very young.

Make sure you have emergency heating equipment in the event that you use electricity – as well as sufficient fuel. When utilizing alternative heating sources, such as your fireplace, wood stove, or space heater, take the necessary safety precautions – and ensure that your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are working.

- The state Fire Marshall also recommends that residents be extra wary about use of

space heaters, which present a fire risk. Space heaters need space, so use them in a 3-foot circle of safety, free of anything that can catch fire. Keep in mind that they are not designed to replace your central heating system, they are only designed to provide a little extra heat on a temporary basis. So be sure to turn them off when you leave a room or go to bed at night.

Residents who see homeless individuals outside during the extreme cold are encouraged to call 911 so that local police can transport them to emergency shelter.

- As in any emergency situation, please check on your elderly or vulnerable neighbors to ensure that they have what they need to ride this out and have taken the appropriate precautions as well.

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